

1           1. An apparatus for providing a comparison of information pertaining to products  
2 for sale from a first source accessible over the Internet, the comparison being independent of  
3 a first hierarchy of arrangement of the first source, the apparatus comprising:

4           a mining module for gathering and organizing the information from the Internet to  
5 form a database having a schema;

6           an input module for acquiring text from a user;

7           a filtering module configured to receive the text from the input module, determine  
8 a micro-context of the information relevant to the text, and locate a subset of the information  
9 in the database, the subset matching the micro-context, wherein the filtering module operates  
10 independently the schema; and

11           a presentation module configured to receive the subset of the information, for  
12 presenting the comparison to a user.

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14           2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the presentation module is configured to  
15 present a second hierarchy of arrangement of the subset of the information.

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17           3. The apparatus of claim 2, wherein the second hierarchy of arrangement comprises  
18 a ranking order designated by a user.

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20           4. The apparatus of claim 3, wherein the presentation module operates independently  
21 of a user's knowledge of the first hierarchy of arrangement of the first source.

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23           5. The apparatus of claim 4, wherein the ranking order designated by a user is  
24 selectively configurable to rank the subset of the information based on criteria independent  
25 of the schema.

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1           6. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the filtering module comprises a context  
2 construction module configured to receive text from the input module and combine words in  
3 the text to form a micro-context, the micro-context further being representative of the  
4 information.

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6           7. The apparatus of claim 6, wherein the filtering module further comprises a context  
7 comparison module configured to receive the micro-context from the context construction  
8 module and acquire a macro-context relevant to the database by comparing the micro-context  
9 to the corpus.

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11           8. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the filtering module further comprises an  
12 information matching module configured to receive the macro-context from the context  
13 comparison module and determine a location of the macro-context in the database, the  
14 database being contextually indexed for searching by context.

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16           9. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the filtering module operates with the text from  
17 the input module as the exclusive form of user input.

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19           10. The apparatus of claim 9, wherein the filtering module is configured to engage  
20 the mining module to gather the information relevant to the text from the Internet and add the  
21 information to the database.

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23           11. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising a tracking module configured to  
24 develop macro-contexts of information relevant to the database by tracking a user's  
25 navigation through the Internet, the macro-contexts further being characteristic of information  
26 sought by a user.

1           12. The apparatus of claim 1, further comprising an updating module configured to  
2 automatically update the comparison periodically after presentation to a user.

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4           13. An apparatus for providing a comparison of information pertaining to products  
5 for sale from a first source accessible over the Internet, the comparison being independent of  
6 a first hierarchy of arrangement of the first source, the apparatus comprising:

7           a mining module for gathering and organizing the information from the Internet to  
8 form a database having a schema;

9           an input module for acquiring text from a user;

10          a filtering module configured to receive the text from the input module, determine  
11 a micro-context of the information relevant to the text, and locate a subset of the information  
12 in the database, the subset matching the micro-context, wherein the filtering module operates  
13 independently the schema; and

14          a presentation module configured to receive the subset of the information, for  
15 presenting the comparison to a user, the presentation module further being configured to  
16 present a second hierarchy of arrangement of the subset of the information, the second  
17 hierarchy of arrangement comprising a ranking order designated by a user.

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19          14. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the filtering module comprises a context  
20 construction module configured to receive text from the input module and combine words in  
21 the text to form a micro-context, the micro-context further being representative of the  
22 information.

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24          15. The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the filtering module further comprises a  
25 context comparison module configured to receive the micro-context from the context  
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1 construction module and acquire a macro-context relevant to the database by comparing the  
2 micro-context to the corpus.

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4 16. The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the filtering module further comprises an  
5 information matching module configured to receive the macro-context from the context  
6 comparison module and determine a location of the macro-context in the database, the  
7 database being contextually indexed for searching by context.

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9 17. The apparatus of claim 16, wherein the ranking order designated by a user is  
10 selectively configurable to rank the subset of the information based on criteria independent  
11 of the schema.

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13 18. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the filtering module is configured to engage  
14 the mining module to gather the information relevant to the text from the Internet and add the  
15 information to the database.

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17 19. The apparatus of claim 18, further comprising a tracking module configured to  
18 develop macro-contexts of information relevant to the database by tracking a user's  
19 navigation through the Internet, the macro-contexts further being characteristic of information  
20 sought by a user.

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22 20. The apparatus of claim 19, further comprising an updating module configured  
23 to automatically update the comparison periodically after presentation to a user.

1           21. A method for extracting information pertaining to products for sale over the  
2 Internet, the method comprising the steps of:

3           mining information from the Internet to form a database having a hierarchical schema;  
4           receiving text from a user as the exclusive form of user input, wherein the text is  
5 descriptive of the information sought;

6           acquiring a macro-context for the information based on the text;

7           locating the information that matches the macro-context in a database; and

8           presenting the information to a user.  
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10          22. The method of claim 21, further comprising the step of combining relevant  
11 words in the text to form a micro-context representative of the information before the step  
12 of acquiring a macro-context for the information.  
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14          23. The method of claim 22, wherein the step of acquiring a macro-context for the  
15 information comprises comparing the micro-context to a corpus indexed by macro-context  
16 to determine the macro-context for the information.  
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18          24. The method of claim 23, wherein the step of locating information that matches  
19 the macro-context in a database comprises searching through indices in the database  
20 corresponding to the macro-contexts and returning the information linked to indices which  
21 correlate to the macro-contexts.  
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23          25. The method of claim 24, wherein the step of presenting the information to a user  
24 comprises presenting the information in a format selected by a user, the format being  
25 independent of the hierarchical schema of the database, for arranging the information.  
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26. The method of claim 25, further comprising the step of gathering additional information relevant to the text from the Internet.

27. The method of claim 26, further comprising the step of tracking a user's navigation through the Internet to develop macro-contexts relevant to a user.

28. The method of claim 27, further comprising the step of automatically updating the information periodically after the step of presenting the information to a user.